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ABSTRACT

From the director's point of view, a "memorable monologue" is one in which the actor exhibits imagination and invention in role-playing. Memorable audition monologues require a measured degree of "risk taking" and uninhibited abandon--the first task is to select monologues that suit the type of script and the role being cast. This paper first gives 11 tips for performing memorable monologues, including: cultivate a natural and conversational delivery of dialogue; display personal habits or mannerisms that distinguish a character; "tune" the vocal instrument to produce sounds, syllables, and words crisply (practice relaxation exercises to free the voice); and focus on the "tempo" that underscores the present moment in the monologue. The paper then presents four additional dimensions related to theater "etiquette" and four performance "strategies" to consider in the memorable audition blueprint. It concludes by stating that "individuality" is still the hallmark of performing memorable monologues, and audition choices should be appropriate and suitable in terms of self-image and professional range of skill or talent. (NKA)

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"Performing Memorable Monologues"

Gerald Lee Ratliff

From the director's point of view, a memorable monologue is one in which the actor exhibits imagination and invention in role-playing.

The director is, of course, hoping to discover actors who are at ease in the interpretation of the role (s) they are playing: and who demonstrate a marked flexibility in the use of voice and body. But the director is also concerned with disovering actors who project a vivid stage presence, relaxed movement style, and inventive phrasing in character interpretation.

Memorable audition monologues require a measured degree of "risk-taking" and uninhibited abandon. So obviously the first task is to select monologues that suit the type of script and the role being cast. The audition blueprint should leave nothing to random chance; and tries to "personalize" the actor's owninterpretation and visualization of the character (s) in the situation being described in the monologue.

Here's some tips for performing memorable monologues to help you forge an inspired and insightful character portrait that is imaginative and inventive:

- Cultivate a natural and conversational delivery of dialogue.
- Promote an intellectual and emotional range of character understanding.
- Reveal interesting stage business to help clarify the "subtext" of a character's action or thought.

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- Create challenging improvisational opportunities that indicate character intention or motivation.
- Display personal habits or mannerisms that distinguish a character.
- Suggest an emphatic identification with the character.
- Search for inventive performance clues in the stage directions.
- Avoid vocal regionalisms, colloqualisms, or distracting speech patterns.
- Generate visually explicit movement patterns that punctuate changing character attitudes or moods.
- "Tune" your vocal instrument to produce sounds, syllables, and words crisply; and practice relaxation exercises to free the voice from anxiety and tension.
- Focus on the "tempo" that underscores the present moment in the monologue.

Additional Dimensions

There are a number of additional dimensions related to theatre "etiquette" and performance "strategies" that you should consider in the memorable audition blueprint.

Etiquette

(1) Always anticipate arriving early for an audition; and never arrive late. Think of the audition as an appointment and always be punctual. If there should be an unexpected delay or emergency, call the theatre and inform the

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staff.

(2) The audition wardrobe should be carefully selected in terms of cut, style, and color to highlight the actor's physical dimensions. A subtle wardrobe that indicates the time period of the script or the character's mood and attitude is always appropriate. Street make-up for women and a light, warm bronzer for men is appropriate as well.

(3) Visit the audition location before the scheduled appointment time and pay particular attention to the size of the stage, entrance and exit doorways, seating arrangement, and acoustical sounds. Familiarity with the audition space should promote a more comfortable and relaxed atmosphere in which your imaginative role-playing can clearly emerge.

(4) In staging the audition monologue, remember to face the audience full-front; and locate any imaginary character (s) " in" the audience, slightly above heads of the spectators. Place limited set pieces down right or down left of center stage to "frame" your movement; and limit hand props to those objects which are essential ingredients of characterization.

Strategies

(1) Some actors use a "metaphor," or implied comparison between the character and something inventive, and then incorporate those imaginative comparisons into the audition performance. Other actors "word play" with the lines of dialogue to heighten the meaning of the spoken words and to

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punctuate the tempo of the character's language. A few actors visualize the "images" suggested in the monologue and explore creative movement patterns to give the images concrete forms of expression.

(2) Some actors experiment with "inner monologues," or what the "actor" is thinking as the "character" is speaking; and with "substitution," where the actor uses a specific person from his/her own life experience and blends that person's mannerisms and personality into the character portrait.

(3) Some actors explore the " 5 W's" journalism approach to the audition performance and cultivate a precision in characterization that simply indicates who the character is, what the character is doing, where the character is doing it, when the character is doing it, and why the character is doing it.

(4) Some actors try to find an expressive "verb" in the monologue that propels the character into immediate action. Other actors reduce character thoughts to one-word "nouns" or invent brief character "biographies" to give added dimension to the audition performance.

Summary

Individuality is still the hallmark of performing memorable monologues and your audition choices should be appropriate and suitable in terms of self-image and professional range of skill or talent. It is also important to cultivate a cohesive audition performance blueprint that allows your own unique imagination and invention to clearly emerge without excessive exaggeration.

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Remember, if you are unable to perform a memorable monologue in the audition there may not be a later opportunity to perform before a live audience.